



# Sustaining a System for High-Quality Teachers

## Research Brief for Report 1: Key Characteristics of Austin Independent School District Teacher Leavers and Transfers

### Purpose

This report addresses the most basic questions related to teacher turnover in Austin Independent School District (AISD). We describe how many teachers transferred or changed jobs in AISD, remained at their schools, or left the school district after the 2013–2014 school year. Then we describe the characteristics of teachers in each group, followed by what we know about the reasons teachers left. We also describe characteristics of the schools from which teachers were most likely to leave, and factors that further distinguished teachers who left even the schools with favorable teacher retention rates. The following key findings provide direction for future studies.

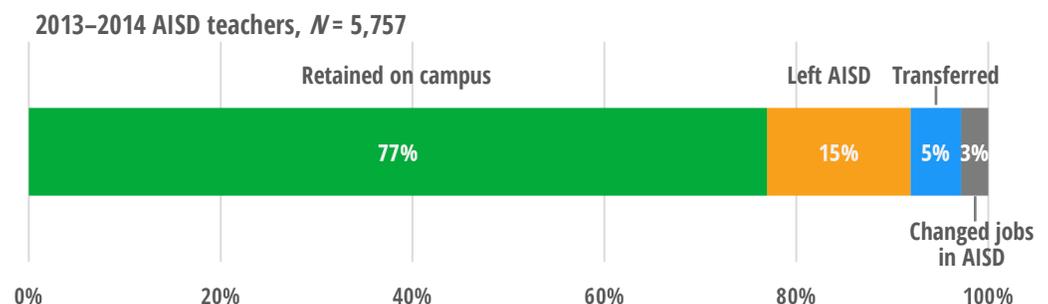
- Leavers and stayers had different qualifications prior to entering AISD.
- Leavers were dissatisfied with the working conditions at their schools, and this was evident up to 3 years before they left.
- School leadership was an important predictor of turnover at high poverty schools.
- Teachers were more likely to stay if they were a good “fit” for their school.

### What percentage of teachers left AISD after 2013–2014?

AISD, like other school systems, faces the challenge of teacher turnover. After the 2013–2014 school year, approximately 77% of AISD teachers remained at the same school (Figure 1). AISD teacher turnover resembled the pattern nationwide. A recent study from the National Center for Education Statistics showed 84% of public school teachers who were teaching during the 2011–2012 school year remained at the same school the following year, while 8% left the profession and 8% moved to a different school either inside or outside the same district.<sup>1</sup>

Figure 1.

**Although 85% of all 2013–2014 AISD teachers remained in the district the following school year, 15% left AISD.**



Source. PEIMS data submission to the Texas Education Agency

Note. Data include employees coded as teachers in 2013–2014 who were not assigned to more than one work location either year.

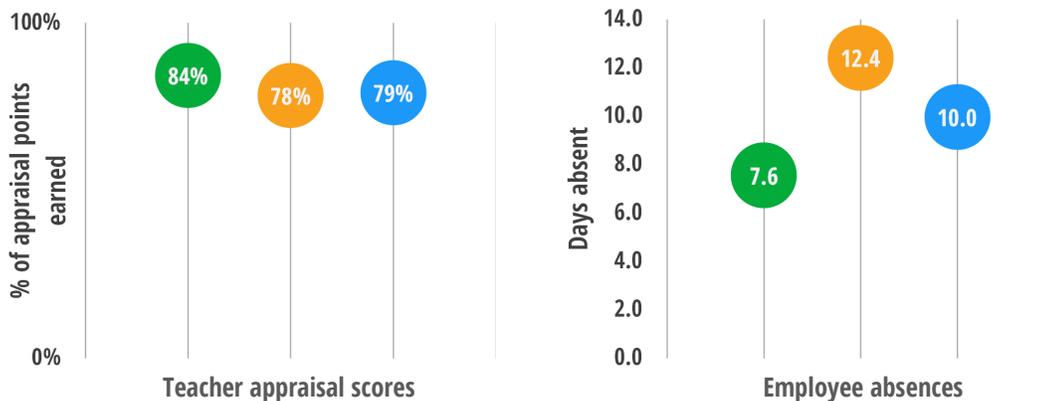
<sup>1</sup>Goldring, R., Tale, S., Riddles, M., & Owens, C. (2014). *Teacher attrition and mobility: Results from the 2012–13 teacher follow-up survey*

## Which teachers stayed, left, or changed schools in AISD?

Teachers who left AISD and those who transferred to another school in AISD after the 2013–2014 school year looked similar to each other in many ways. Additionally, both groups differed on key characteristics from teachers who remained at their schools.

Gender and race/ethnicity did not differ much for leavers and stayers, but experience, certification type, value-added scores, appraisal scores, and absences did (Figure 2).<sup>2</sup>

Figure 2. Teachers who **left AISD** or **changed schools** after 2013–2014 earned fewer appraisal points in 2013–2014 and missed about 5 more days in 2013–2014 than did those who **remained at their schools**.

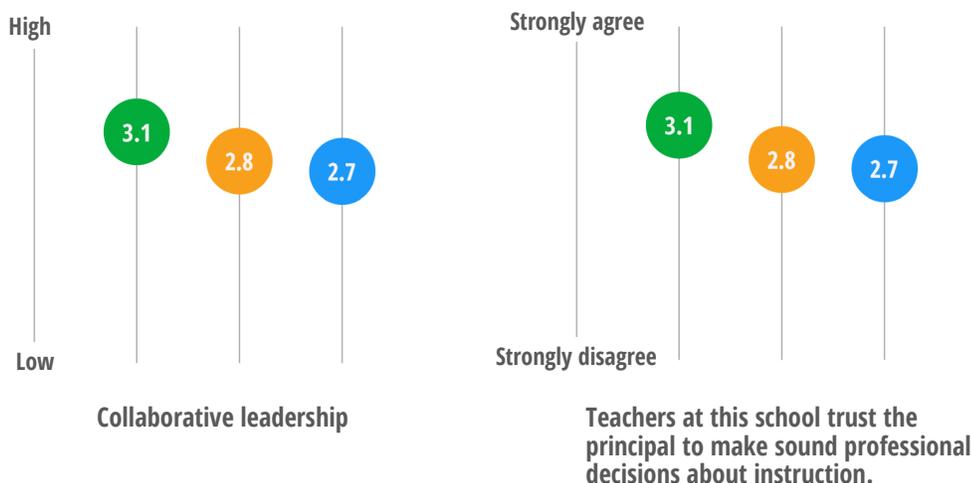


Sources. District HR records

## Why did teachers leave their schools?

Teachers who left AISD or changed schools after 2013–2014 were less satisfied with their schools overall, and were less satisfied with the school leadership, than were those who remained at their schools the following year (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Teachers who **left AISD** or **changed schools** after 2013–2014 reported lower collaborative leadership at their schools and rated trust in their principals lower in 2013–2014 than did those who **remained at their schools**.



Source. 2014 TELL AISD Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey

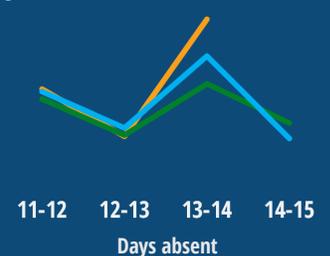
<sup>2</sup>For more details, see the full report: DRE 14.119.

## What happened after teachers transferred?

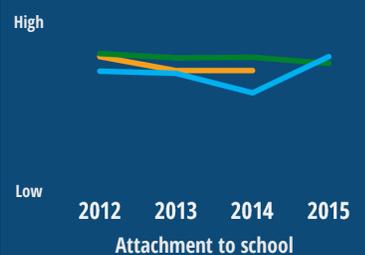
We limited data to teachers who had been at their schools for at least 3 years prior to leaving. Data showed longitudinal differences in attendance, attachment, and overall school perceptions before they left.

However, teachers who transferred rebounded following the move.

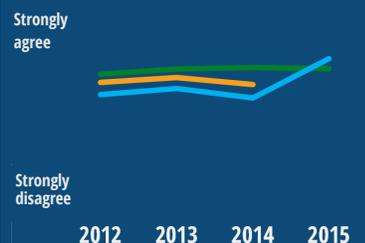
**Leavers** missed ~6 more days in their final year than **stayers**. **Transfers** showed better attendance after moving.



**Leavers** and **transfers** had lower attachment than **stayers**, but **transfers'** ratings improved dramatically after moving.



**Leavers** and **transfers** rated their schools lower than **stayers**, but **transfers'** ratings improved dramatically after moving.



Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.

## What characterizes the schools teachers left?

Many school demographic and working conditions factors influenced teacher retention rates in AISD. Figure 4 displays factors found to be related to school teacher retention rates in AISD.

Figure 4. Schools with lower teacher retention differed from those with higher teacher retention in important ways.

### Schools with **lower** teacher retention rates had...

#### Different school characteristics

- Higher % economically disadvantaged students
- Shorter principal tenure at school
- Lower average teacher experience
- Shorter average teacher tenure at school
- Higher % novice teachers
- Lower TAKS/STAAR performance
- Higher total discipline rate



#### Different teaching and learning conditions

- Less collaborative leadership
- Less community support and engagement
- Less favorable general school climate
- Less desirable management of student conduct
- Lower achievement press

Sources. District HR records; District TAKS/STAAR records; PEIMS; TELL AISD Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey (2012-2014)

Note. Variables were included in this list when (a) they were correlated with school retention rate for at least 2 years between 2012 and 2014, and (b) when the relationship was significant after controlling for school-level economic disadvantage.

In general, AISD schools that served more economically disadvantaged students retained fewer teachers than did schools serving fewer economically disadvantaged students. However, some schools with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students also had high teacher retention rates. Some important school leadership differences were found between high-poverty schools with low retention and high-poverty schools with high retention. Using teaching and learning conditions survey data, we found large differences between high-poverty/high-retention and high-poverty/low-retention schools, particularly for items related to school leadership (Figure 5).

Figure 5. High-poverty/high-retention schools differed from high-poverty/low-retention schools on measures of school leadership in 2013–2014.

My principal involves faculty in decisions that directly impact the operations of my school.

74% 89%

Teachers trust the principal to make sound professional decisions about instruction.

75% 89%

Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.

71% 81%

The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.

81% 91%

Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.

87% 96%

The school leadership consistently supports teachers.

76% 85%



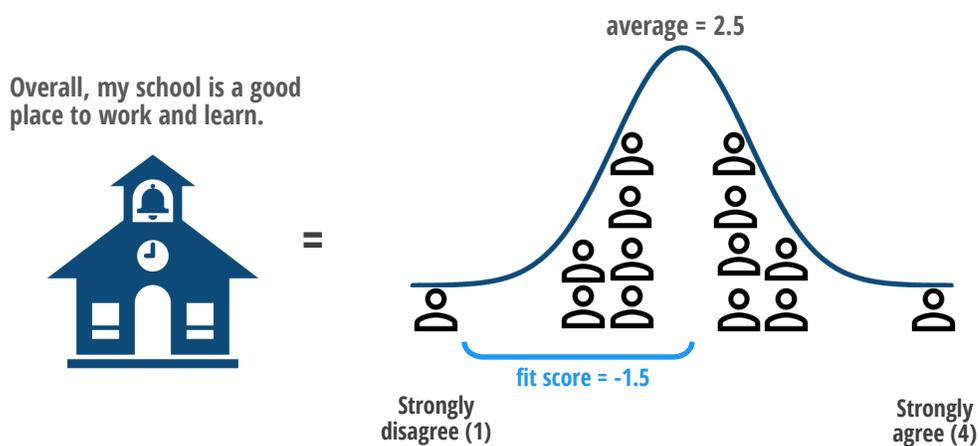
Average principal years at school

Source. 2014 TELL AISD Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey

## How can we describe the fit between teachers and schools?

Although teacher turnover was higher at schools with certain characteristics, some teachers still chose to leave even the schools with the most seemingly desirable qualities. Thus, we wanted to examine factors that distinguished teachers who chose to leave a school, regardless of school characteristics. Using TELL survey responses for teachers who had been at their schools at least 3 years, we found two key factors that identified teachers who left the district or changed schools. Teachers who left AISD began providing lower ratings than their schools' average ratings for a) collaborative leadership items and b) the item "Overall, my school is a good place to work" up to 3 years prior to leaving. Teachers who transferred in AISD had provided lower-than-average ratings of their schools all 4 years prior to leaving. Thus, it is apparent from TELL survey results these teachers had not fit the school environment for quite some time. The opinions of some teachers simply did not fit with the opinions of other teachers at their school (Figure 6).

Figure 6.  
"Fit" can be measured as the difference between an individual and the average for all teachers at the same school.



## What else do we need to know about teachers who leave or who might leave?

To better understand the importance of the match between teachers and schools, it would be useful to know what information teachers and hiring administrators consider during the recruitment and interview process. Follow-up studies should examine whether teacher transfers remain satisfied beyond the first year at a new location. Future research also should address the potential similarities and differences with respect to why teachers leave a particular school and why they choose a new location. The evidence is clear that working conditions, particularly school leadership, are critical to teacher retention. However, much is left to discover about the importance of finding a good fit. Future studies should examine the factors related to fit, particularly for high quality teachers.

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